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The Church and her Prophets

Dwight Edwards Marvin

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“The Church and Her Prophets”

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Marvin

The Church AND Her Prophets

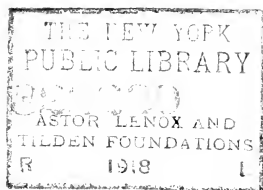
BY

Dwight Edwards Marvin



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To
My Son,
CHARLES INGALLS MARVIN

BY DWIGHT EDWARDS MARVIN

The Christman

A novel of Christian Experience; indicating the secret of spiritual strength and usefulness.

Prof. Slagg of London

A Character Study of Modern Life.

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THE CHURCH

"At Beigate, England, in the spacious grounds of the ancient Priory, there is a tree which is known as the 'tree of decision.' Under it stood Lady Henry Somerset in the darkest hour of her life; the very foundations seemed to be giving way. She was struggling with the awful question, Is there a God? when there came to her the message, *'Live as though I were, and you shall know that I am.'* The decision was made, and God became real.

When the world lives as if God were, then the world will have a REAL GOD. HIS TABERNACLE WILL BE WITH MEN, AND HE WILL DWELL WITH THEM, AND THEY SHALL BE HIS PEOPLE, AND GOD HIMSELF SHALL BE WITH THEM, AND BE THEIR GOD."—JOSIAH STRONG.

"Under the terms of three striking figures the Master has set forth the mission of His Church in the world. The disciples are as light in the world, bearing witness for the truth, enlightening the conscience of men, making men know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. They are the salt of the earth, purifying, sweetening, preserving the life of mankind from decay and death, and making it meet for the Master's use. They are the leaven hidden in the meal, to transform and change it, and make it fit for the Master's table. The Church is not a mutual benefit society, though it benefits in incalculable ways its members. It is not a social club, though its social life is most marked. Over and above all, it is a society intent on the one object of purifying, sweetening, transforming, saving the entire life of the world. 'The true and grand idea of the church,' said Thomas Arnold, 'is a society for making men like Christ, earth like Heaven, and the kingdoms of this world the Kingdoms of our God.'"—SAMUEL ZANE BATTEN.

"I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a Son of Man, and he came even to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, and all the peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."—DANIEL THE PROPHET.

The Church and Her Prophets

THE CHURCH.

One of our modern writers reminds us that the great movements and events which mark the centuries have very commonly come to a definite close, but that the nineteenth century generally suggested not finality or completeness, but rather beginnings.

The age is transitional. Men are waking to a realization that

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there are larger opportunities for improvement in conditions of life than have been conceived by past generations; that there is a broader, purer, and more beneficent life possible here and now than has ever been dreamed. It is this vision that disturbs society and that causes deep longing and ceaseless effort of thinkers and workers everywhere.

We have heard of some Arctic explorers whose vessel became fastened in snow and ice. Looking abroad they saw only the cold, unyielding barriers that imprisoned them, yet they were not disheartened, for they turned their faces each morning toward the sky and

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saw the deeper blue that always hangs over unfrozen water. To them the heavens declared that an open sea lay not far beyond, and it was this thought that gave them hope and confidence.

More positive to us are the signs of the times in which we live. While the spirit of commercialism and pleasure seeking seems to present a barrier to the best human development, we can look beyond it and see in the deeper movements of the people a well-defined purpose to insist on higher standards of living. These unmistakable evidences of a speedy deliverance cheer our hearts and stimulate us to renewed effort, for they indicate

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that the world is rapidly coming to count character of more worth than gold, and true manhood and womanhood more worthy of attainment than great possessions.

Warnings are not infrequently heard regarding the approach of a social revolution, which we are told will be more radical and far-reaching than any that has ever been known. The rich, it is said, are growing richer and the poor poorer; animosity is taking the place of good will between masters and men; and slowly but surely the masses are preparing to sweep away all existing social conditions and establish a new order of things.

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This is a gloomy outlook, but it is false in that it takes little or no account of the increasing altruistic spirit of the age, the rising demand for righteousness in trade and government, and the growing insistence on the application of the golden rule by employers and employees in their relations to one another.

So long as knowledge and resources increase there must be frequent social readjustment. In the future, as in the past, changes will take place. Some, it may be, will work to the temporary disadvantage of many, but in the end they will be found to be so beneficent that the generations following will

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wonder that they were not made before. There will be no such sudden convulsive revolution as has been predicted, for the world is not under the control of human passions, but of divine providence. God is working out His purpose with men through the evolution of grace and He will work until the end is reached.

The appointed instruments for the guidance of the race in its moral development has ever been and ever will be the Church and her prophets.

THE CHURCH AND HER PROPHETS.

“I will send the Comforter unto you,” said Jesus, “and when He is come, He will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”—I will send Him unto you, my disciples, that through you He may exercise His convicting power.

The Church has always been slow to adjust herself to the movements of God, and when such movements have been radical and rapid, she has seemed in her conservatism to be resisting the course

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of progress and improvement. It is not, therefore, strange that true men should often be found condemning Christian organizations for their apathy and charging them with disloyalty to the Gospel; but it should not be forgotten that the Church is under the power of preferences and methods created through its historic development, that religious customs have an enduring hold on the life, that inheritance and training bias the heart as well as the mind, and that the consciences of most men cannot be quickly changed. Convictions with the strongest characters are of slow growth.

While there is much unfaithful-

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ness and weakness in the Christian Church, she stands to-day at the front of all great moral reforms and holds her place as the recognized medium of spiritual power.

After having visited America to study the genius of our institutions, DeTocqueville reported to the French senate: "I went at their bidding, and passed along their thoroughfares of trade; I ascended their mountains, and went down their valleys; I visited their manufactories, their commercial markets and emporiums of trade; I entered their judicial courts and legislative halls; but I sought everywhere in vain until I entered the church. It was there,

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as I listened to the soul-equalizing and soul-elevating principles of the Gospel of Christ, as they fell from Sabbath to Sabbath, upon the masses of the people, that I learned why America was great and free.”

Under the pressure of modern conditions, the Church is coming to have a clearer conception of her duties and her privileges, and is slowly but surely adjusting herself to meet the needs of men. Much of the beneficent work that she is doing would have been considered a few years ago as out of harmony with her mission. Time and changing circumstances increase her power and render her services more comprehensive, thus her in-

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fluence grows and will continue to grow until she touches all departments of life with her helpful ministries.

Judging from the present drift of religious thought and Christian purpose, the work of the Church will be increasingly regenerative, spiritual, fraternal, progressive, convergent, and triumphant.

IT WILL BE REGENERA- TIVE.

It is a common delusion to believe that Christianity is nothing more than creed holding, the observance of churchly forms, morality of life or the possession of lofty ideals; whereas it is the domination of a personality; it is Christ possessing man. "I am the vine," said the Master, "Ye are the branches."

While right thinking must ever lie back of right living, there is truth in John Wesley's remark that, a man may be as orthodox as

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the devil, and as wicked. "The devils believe and shudder." Knowing this, the Apostle prayed that Christ might dwell through faith in the hearts of the Ephesians, to the end that they might be rooted and grounded in love and be able to apprehend their Lord, and be filled with the fullness of God.

It is a mistake to imagine that because idleness and ignorance bring forth wretchedness and crime, that, therefore, legal restraint coupled with opportunity and education are sufficient to secure social purity and uprightness of life. Where a sense of sin and the need of deliverance therefrom

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is absent, there is no hope of permanent reform.

While the Church of God is called upon to second every wise and honest effort that is made for the amelioration of the woes of mankind and the improvement of society, her primal duty is to seek deliverance from sin and transformation of character through regeneration and spiritual development.

Mr. Gladstone tells a tale of Lord Melbourne once coming out of a country church in a great fume. Finding a friend, he began to pour out his wrath and give vent to his grievance as follows: "It's too bad! I have always been

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a supporter of the church, and have always upheld the clergy; but it is really too bad to have to listen to a sermon like that we have had this morning. Why, the preacher actually insisted upon applying religion to a man's private life."

It is often said that the day of personal conversion has passed, that the old-fashioned call to repentance and faith is no longer needed. Why not? Has the method of God changed? Has sin ceased to be destructive? Has the private life of men become so pure and holy that reformation is unnecessary? Has the world reached so high a degree of cultivation that

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it needs no help from One mighty to save?

When the Church ceases to work for the regeneration of men, her usefulness in the world will come to an end. There is, however, no danger of her thus becoming unmindful of her call, for not only will she continue to seek the spiritual transformation of individuals by her silent ministries, but will also lead in great revival movements that will sweep whole communities with awakening, purifying, and uplifting power.

“It is quite possible,” we have been told, “for society to be at the same time well housed, well fed, well clothed, well educated, and

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well rotted." Material comforts do not alter the character; and unless sin is overcome, misery and death will follow.

Changing social conditions may cut new channels for service and open larger opportunities for God to carry on His transforming work, but they will not do away with the necessity for regeneration.

IT WILL BE SPIRITUAL.

Ecclesiasticism may to a large extent retain its hold on the hearts of men and denominationalism continue to divide communities, yet Christians must come to see more and more through the forms of things, as Carlyle put it, and discover the things themselves.

Multitudes of men, in their deepest need, turn away from religious formulas and reach out for a conscious oneness with their Maker, feeling confident that God and God alone can satisfy them.

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This hungering for that which is real must be met by the Church in her ministry. She must realize that religion does not consist in the possession of theological opinions, but in the possession of divinity.

Gradually, but surely, Christians are awakening to this fact, and are separating in their work that which is essential from that which is expedient, and are declaring with emphasis that the mystery of God, hidden for ages, is nothing more than "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Jesus never intended that men should merely intellectually assent to His sayings, and then, that they

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might the better use His words for ecclesiastical organization and controversy, give them an orderly pen and ink arrangement and expression; but rather that they should find through them the Father.

It is very difficult for those who have never realized the possession of Christ to understand the peace and power that He brings; hence all the objections of unbelievers are directed not against Christianity itself, but some imperfect expression of it. It is comparatively easy to construct a plausible argument against the opinions and purposes of men, no matter how saintly they may be, or against religious organizations, creeds, or

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even the letter of the Scripture itself; but Christianity is not human opinion or intention; it is not profession or institution; it is not a declaration or a book, even though that book be inspired of God. Christianity is, as has been said, Christ, and nothing but Christ, His living presence in the world possessed of men and possessing men, and moving through them in beneficence and power.

Hugh Price Hughes says, "No Chinaman imagines for a moment that there is any vital union between himself and Confucius; no Buddhist dreams of such organic fellowship with Buddha; no Mohammedan would say, 'I live, yet

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not I, but Mohammed liveth in me.' But St. Paul does say, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' and he meant it to be taken literally, as a psychological fact, not as a mere metaphor or figure of speech."

In coming years, there will be less and less inclination to wrangle over methods and definitions. The great effort of the Church will be to meet man's spiritual needs by a real spiritual help, by interpreting Christ to him so that receiving Christ, his life will be "transformed by the renewing of his mind that he may prove" to himself and to others in his life work "what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

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IT WILL BE FRATERNAL.

After the day of Pentecost, the disciples of Jerusalem had all things in common, and in the exuberance of their faith and affection distributed their property. The impulse of love and not the edict of an Apostle drove them to liberality, for consideration, tenderness, and sacrificial helpfulness are the natural expressions of heart attachment.

As the Church grows in knowledge and enters more perfectly into the spirit of the Master, she

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will more constantly aim to form her members into a great fraternal organization under the leadership of the living Christ, to carry comfort and hope and material aid to all who are in need.

There are conditions of life that render personal regeneration well nigh impossible. There is not a great city in the world where there are not multitudes who have no hope because of their inheritance and environments; and it is a growing conviction on the part of Christians everywhere that the work of the Church is not only to cry with John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God!" but, like him,

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to prepare the way by which He may be seen.

Dr. F. W. Farrar, writing of Gen. Booth, said, "His mission was to the neglected, to the wretched, to the destitute, to the submerged tenth. He went to the sheep without a shepherd, who were wandering untended on the hills of darkness; to wretches without a home and without a hope; to street Arabs and gutter children, the waifs and strays of our horrible slums; to men and women ruined by drink and crime, living in dens foul as the lairs of wild beasts, for whom there seemed to be no earthly prospect but the cell of the felon, the grave of the suicide, or the

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dreary misery of the workhouse."

No less is it the duty of others to go forth, sent by the Church as missionaries of Christ to disciple not only all nations of men, but all men, the debauched and groveling in enlightened communities and the idolatrous and cruel in lands shadowed by heathen superstition.

In tracing the development of the Christian Church, we find that, after humility in service, hope of a speedy return of Christ, and patient endurance of persecution, there came a period of yielding to the blandishments of worldly authority, a gradual increase of temporal power and final lapsing into ceremonialism and worldliness. In

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time, men realized that costly cathedrals did not insure the manifest presence of Jesus Christ, that dim lights and solemn services did not do away with sin, and there came to the hearts of the people a great longing for a real God. Then the Reformation was born with all its attendant exhibition of consecration, energy, courage, and heroism. Revolutionary doctrines were publicly taught and received. Some of the creed tenets of the time were beneficent and uplifting, others were hard and narrow. It could not have been otherwise. Great religious upheavals afford opportunity to both the tolerant and the intolerant.

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One age is the forerunner of another. To-day we are entering another Reformation more wonderful and far-reaching than any that has preceded. God is leading His Church into a larger conception of the divine commission. We must expect that there will be men of narrow vision, who will strive to contract Christian work and keep it within the range of past limitations. They are good, true, and earnest men, and it is because they are conscientious that they are determined; but their standards are standards of yesterday and not of to-day. The fence line of traditions presents an impassable barrier, so that they cannot go beyond

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and keep step with the movements of God in the history that is in making; but the advancing Church will not be hindered in its work until the Kingdom of Heaven is fully realized. A universal brotherhood united in the spirit and under the leadership of Jesus Christ "who would have all men to be saved," is the aim of Christian effort everywhere, but salvation is a word that is made no longer to apply exclusively to deliverance from future doom. It now is understood to include present emancipation from conditions adverse to the reign of God, rescue from ignorance and blindness of heart, and redemption

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from sin with its consequent misery and death.

In harmony with this larger conception of salvation, Institutional Churches are being organized in thickly settled districts of great cities; boys' and girls' clubs, with gymnasiums, reading rooms, baths and trade instructions, are making their appearance. Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations have been transformed in their methods, new and beautiful buildings have been erected with educational, employment, recreation, and devotional rooms and halls; and Social Settlements with home surroundings and helpful

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teachings have been established in tenement districts.

Everywhere Christians are discovering that the true "religion of humanity" is the religion Christ made practical, and that brotherhood can be effected and sustained by the removal of the barriers to holiness, so that the uplifted Master of Men can draw all men unto Himself and closer to one another.

IT WILL BE CONVERGENT.

Men have arisen in the past who have seemed to be possessed of almost superhuman intelligence, magnetism, and power. They wrought wonders in their day. Their purposes were often so exalted that they led large numbers of their fellow men to greater nobility of life. As meteors they flashed forth and then disappeared. Though lauded by the people of their own generation, most of them have been forgotten, and not even their names appear in the pages of history.

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Among the multitude of leaders, Jesus Christ alone stands supreme. His life, once written in the Gospels, has been written again and again in the lives of His disciples and has become wonderful in the councils of nations. Victor Hugo said, "A cannon ball makes only two thousand miles an hour. Light makes two hundred thousand miles a second. Such is the superiority of Jesus Christ over Napoleon."

Newman Smyth, in one of his uplifting books, tells us that, "In the northern part of Maine there is a mountain which springs from the midst of the forest, unapproached by lesser heights, lifting its solitary peak into the clouds. Float-

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ing down the stream which flows by it, between the overhanging banks, suddenly, at some turn of the river's course, I have seen Mount Katahdin standing out from the interminable forest, its grand lines sharply defined, its single peak rising alone into the sky. Often that mountain vision seems repeated, as I am brought before the character of Christ. Above the interminable level of common human nature, across the intervening distances of history, an image of solitary majesty stands out before the mind; and the view of that sublime character, rising from the midst of our low, monotonous human attainments, clearly outlined

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against the soul's horizon, in its wonderful elevation, is an inspiration and a joy awakening the whole moral enthusiasm of our being."

Christ moves among men, separate from them in character, yet one with them in sympathy and assistance. The purest of the pure, the strongest of the strong, the wisest of the wise, the greatest of the great, "the holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the holy," He has become and must ever remain the regenerator of the race. Thousands of men, whose intelligence was limited, and whose circumstances were restricted, have become great in His greatness.

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He, who once "lifted with His pierced hand empires off their hinges and turned the stream of centuries out of its course and still governs the ages," took possession of their lives, guided their wills, imbued their souls with higher and nobler ambitions, and bore them on to places of larger usefulness and commanding influence.

Gradually, reformers are coming to a deep conviction that there is no force that can efficiently regenerate human nature and make men morally great, save that which is manifest by the presence of Christ in the life; and that He, and He alone, is the divinely appointed leader in social, commercial, and

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political improvement. Already His name has been given to hundreds of charitable and philanthropic institutions, and His spirit is possessing the souls of multitudes who work within the church fold and without for the amelioration of the woes of men.

In this age of restless activity and covetous grasping for material benefits, men are coming, as never before, to possess a profound and all-impelling belief in Jesus as the world's great necessity; and they turn to the Church in His name pleading for help in alleviating the sufferings of mankind. With a continual broadening view of man's need, and a narrowing view of the

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remedy for sin and misery, Christians are turning to the Master of men with a stronger faith and larger hope. Ignoring the differences that have separated them, they are drawing about Christ and in His presence learning the lesson of divine compassion. Near the heart of the world's Deliverer, the things that once parted them seem small and trivial, and they realize their oneness in faith and purpose. In the companionship of Him, who once touched the leper and forgave the outcast woman, their eyes are opened to discover that there is hope, not only for the superstitious inhabitants in distant lands, and the degraded people of savage com-

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munities; but that all men need the touch of love and can be saved, for they are sacred, being made in the image of their God. Men who dwell in dark and dirty tenements, whose lives are defiled by foul and polluted surroundings; who toil in noxious and tainted air; who have become slaves to greed and cruel pride; or who have warped their lives and crushed out their better instincts by the struggle for bread—these are the men who appear in a new light to the Church as she in all her branches nears the presence of the Healer of Nazareth. In the stress and necessity of the age she is drawing closer to her Lord and is there being transformed to see

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the world as He saw it, a suffering but sacred world to be regenerated by divine grace.

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IT WILL BE TRIUMPHANT.

When we see the forces of evil united to overthrow that which is good, inducements to wrongdoing flaunted before the passing multitudes, the things once held sacred counted as but trivialities, we are prone to be false in our judgments and cry in bitterness of soul, "How long, O Lord? How long?" We forget that God lives and that the stars fade only because a new dawning is at hand.

"In the streets, the markets, and the palaces of Rome," we are told,

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“there was a gay crowd—philosophers, nobles, and people—confident in their strength, proud of themselves as rulers of the world. In the catacombs beneath there were gathered a few penitents—men and women conscious of sin, crying out their weakness, and claiming to be nothing. Out of the catacombs, and not from the philosophies or power of Rome, has come the force of modern progress.”

Beneath all the glittering and strenuous activity of the century, all the vulgar display of the pampered rich, and all the boasted potency of material things, there are other and greater forces at work.

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Multitudes of earnest Christians are crying out to God in penitence and faith, and in response to their pleading, the Spirit of the Almighty is moving in the Church. Out of the religious life of the people and not from the philosophies and power of civilization will come the forces of real progress.

God has always worked in the world toward a definite end. Sometimes His purposes have been almost imperceptible, but they have been no less certain. Though the footfall of Providence may not always be heard, there is no lagging or halting.

With a clearer discernment than many, Benjamin Kidd declares

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that "The evolution which is slowly proceeding in human society is not primarily intellectual but religious in character." Gradually the powers of sin are weakening and the powers of holiness are strengthening. God is coming to His own in the world.

When, therefore, we hear it said that there is no king but the majority, and that the majority is always evil, we seek a wider vision and learn from history, prophecy, and observation that "God and one are a majority," and that "Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

Sometimes we hear men speculating about the millennium. Will

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it last a thousand years? Will it come before or after the second advent? Will the Son of Man make His appearance in a physical or spiritual form? The lawlessness of the age and the pronounced character of evil have driven them to long for some speedy manifestation of divine power. What matters the time and manner of the Lord's second coming, so long as the event is sure and the Church is ready to hail Him as her King? Better, far better, enter into the consciousness of His present nearness. The true millennium, whatever may be its disclosures and whenever it may begin, will be no more than the consummation of a

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divine purpose that is now being carried out in the world, and in which every man may have a part. The King and the Kingdom are one, and we are subjects and citizens.

The Church of Christ exists not for the purpose of coddling a few saints, but rather for the purpose of helping many sinners. She has no vice-regal authority, no special rights that permit the assumption of power. To her has been given an opportunity and a commission, not that she should be served, but that she should serve. Disloyalty to her trust may deprive her of the glory of her high calling, but it

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will not prevent the consummation of the divine purpose.

While there may be much lethargy among the Master's disciples, and in many sections of the Christian world an apparent loss of vital interest in the things of God, the Church is struggling nobly to adjust herself to changing conditions and to faithfully perform the will of Heaven. The experimental trial of new methods, wise and unwise, the eager acceptance of peculiar responsibilities, the alliance with organizations that are committed to work exclusively for the physical betterment of men, the persistent missionary spirit that drives her members into almost every place

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where evangelization seems necessary, and a growing assertiveness in work for the purification of political, commercial, and social conditions, all point to an earnest desire to prove her loyalty.

There are not wanting thinkers and workers who warn us of a coming collapse of the Church because the love of many seems to be growing cold. They point to the religious life of the past and contrast it with that of the present. Clouds there are that shut out the sun's shining, but the day continues to advance. While they are yet speaking, a silver lining illumines the overhanging veil. A new type of civilization is coming

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into existence and a transformed Church endowed with the Spirit of God is rising to meet the need.



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"Oh, do not pray for easy lives! Pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle. But you shall be a miracle. Every day you shall wonder at yourself, at the richness of life which was to come to you by the grace of God."—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

"You ask me what are the opportunities of the Christian ministry. They are what the man, the minister, makes them, as big as the biggest, and as small as the smallest. The one great longing of the world, of all the world, is for the Gospel to be preached as Jesus preached it; and wherever it is so preached, the congregation is limited only by the walls of the church. All other things are forgotten. The heart of man is not bad; it is good, for God is in it, despite all that tries to crowd Him out. And it isn't eloquence that appeals to it, but the touch that tells the hearer that the preacher has seen the things to which he bears witness, that he knows God and His love. I once wanted to be a preacher, but gave it up because I was not worthy. But were I now to wish for another life here, it would be that I might be fitted to go out, staff in hand, from hamlet to town, telling the children of men the old, old story as the *only* thing that has balm for the world's woes."—JACOB A. RIIS.

"Teachers have been too often stewards who bring out only the old things from the treasury, words spoken thousands of years ago, and acts fitted to another age. . . . They teach, but the people, tried and troubled by thoughts of duty to the rich or duty to the poor, find no help in their teaching. . . . If the Church could send teachers who, in the study of modern movements and modern thoughts, had found a present Christ, if in the name of that Christ they could tell what Christ requires men to do, their words would convince of sin, of righteousness and judgment. Christ would once more prove conqueror, and men would give up their 'rights' as they gave up their slaves."—SAMUEL A. BARNETT.

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THE PRESENT NEED.

In view of changing conditions, who, in the future, are to be the moulders of religious thought and activity? It is not hard to tell. Already the men who are coming to the front indicate who are to be selected as the chosen instruments of the Spirit in leading the Church into a larger service.

We are told that the ministry as a chosen profession is unsought by college men; that business opportunities are more alluring to the average youth, with ambition and

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purpose, than preaching the Gospel to self-satisfied and apathetic listeners, while he is struggling to eke out a living on a meagre salary. And so the ranks of the ministry go unfilled and hundreds of communities are left without religious instruction or care.

If we look deeply enough we will find that the dearth in the ministry is due not so much to a lower grade of piety among college men, as to changing social conditions and the unsettled state of the Church as she tries to adjust herself to new obligations and embrace new opportunities of service. Church members are beginning to feel that they do not need mere religious

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declaimers, or restless organizers, no matter how sincere may be their motives or earnest their efforts; that, as men destined for immortal life with Divine obligations, they need leaders who will bring them into a more intimate acquaintance with God and help them to be like Him in character and service. Leadership has always been in demand. It is the same to-day as of old; but there is a greater and more general intelligence among the people. New influences are at work and new requirements force themselves on the attention. Necessity creates a demand for leadership of a different quality than of old. The ministry is no longer

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merely one of the learned professions; it is a Divine ambassadorship, and credentials are asked for, that neither the schools nor natural taste can give. The Church to carry on its work, therefore, demands men who have a message.

MEN WHO HAVE A MESSAGE.

It is not a difficult task for a young man to prepare for the vocation of preaching as a means by which to obtain an income, and at the same time have the satisfaction of feeling that he is doing good in the world. He may, if he has the ability, and is diligent in his work, rise to considerable eminence in his profession and exert a wide influence, but that is quite another thing from the conscious possession of a Divine commission and an ability to declare

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in all sincerity as did the Apostle to the Gentiles, "We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God."

Prepared speeches on any great moral theme generally secure respectful consideration, but it is the message from the Court of Heaven that carries authority and power. The demand for Prophets is not the expression of a passing fancy, but the cry of a waiting Church in her need of men who are called and sent of God. Prophets there have always been, Prophets there must always be, but few generations

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have realized their necessity as the present.

Bishop Brent asserts, "Mankind has always been listening for the voice of God. Never yet has a Prophet announced his errand as being God's spokesman without creating excitement and attracting a following. The crowd may abandon him if they mistake his message, or crucify him if they hate it; but their violence only bears new witness to the importance attached to the question by the people. And it is also something to reflect upon that Prophets are not put to death on the score that they are Prophets, but that they are false Prophets, pretending

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to be messengers from God when they know they are not."

The true ambassador of God will never turn aside from his calling that he may attract a multitude by the discussion of strange and trivial themes, or the promulgation of theories more speculative than valuable. The reformer has no inclination to entertain. It is not his ambition to draw men to himself, save only that he may by so doing attract them to Christ. His sense of responsibility as a messenger will cause him to be ever inquiring the will of God, so that he may be able to speak with an authority born of Heaven. The reality of the messenger will give reality to

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the message. When he refers to common experiences, which he must, it will be to transmute them and give them a new and sublime significance.

“The heart of man is not bad,” declares Jacob A. Riis, “it is good, for God is in it, despite all that tries to crowd Him out. And it isn’t eloquence that appeals to it, but the touch that tells the hearer that the preacher has seen the things to which he bears witness, that he knows God and His love.”

MEN WHO ARE NOT AFRAID.

God wants men who are not afraid, who have convictions that grip their souls so that they dare to speak whether others will heed their messages or not.

Heroes are made not by yielding to impulse, but by following the behests of duty. The brave man does not will to meet danger; he is often oblivious of its existence; he wills only to do right as he sees the right, whether his procedure is perilous or not. Such a one was John Knox, who, as Car-

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lyle tells us, "had no particular consciousness of his courage, but rather a readiness in all simplicity to do and dare whatsoever is commanded by the inward voice of native manhood."

There is a so-called fearlessness that is nothing more than a display of ill temper or low ambition, and is, therefore, a sign of weakness. Under the protection of the pulpit, men will on occasions seek to justify conduct or answer criticism by a harshness of speech that shows that they have not learned the art of self-control. It may be that they satisfy their disturbed feelings by calling resentment "righteous indignation" or "courage of

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conviction," but the character of a wrong procedure cannot be changed by giving it a good name. In the same way, men will sometimes seek for distinction by sensational pulpit audacity that the unthinking multitude mistakes for moral courage; or they will condemn faults of which their hearers are not guilty, and over which they have no control. Pride and passion often take possession of the mind, and all men, especially those who are before the public, should be careful lest they mistake weakness for strength, bravado for bravery, audacity for boldness, and self-assertion for self-mastery.

The most stubborn enemy that

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any man can meet is his own errant nature. He, who can bring his innermost being before the judgment seat of conscience without flinching and without compromise, possesses the elements of true heroism.

Every Prophet of God is by virtue of his calling a possible martyr and must therefore be brave and strong. No earthly casuist can shape his course, no seductive pleasure can turn his will, no material advantage can blind his vision. He is forbidden to turn the stones into bread, or leave the temple heights for the plaudits of the crowd below, or accept the kingdoms of the world at the price of

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humiliation. He sees only the goal of duty done, he hears only the voice of God within. In the strength of Him who was Himself a martyr for the sins of the people, he presses forward upheld by a Divine presence, to fulfil his holy vocation. Having learned to say with Paul, "I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God," he is enabled to add with confidence, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."

The priest may abide at the altar in adoring reverence, the pastor

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may minister to his fellow men in deeds of helpfulness and words of hope, the teacher may repeat his doctrines to waiting congregations; and, as each performs his ministry, the Church calls with increasing emphasis for men who have heard God speak to them and can therefore be His fearless messengers.

MEN WHO HAVE HEART POWER.

The necessity of thorough mental training for the Gospel ministry can hardly be overestimated. Increased general intelligence requires a greater degree of scholarship than has ever been known before. While the Church cannot lessen her demand for an educated ministry, she is realizing more and more that mere scholarship will not suffice to meet the necessities of the age; that there is a universal craving for sympathetic friendliness on the part of the people that

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grows stronger year by year as the complexities of civilized life increase. Everywhere one may hear the cry for a creed that may be reduced to the simple terms, "The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man," yet the multitudes who call for such a statement of belief as sufficient for their needs are not satisfied with its mere intellectual acceptance. They demand that it should be made real and vital in daily life; hence the universal demand for practical preaching, which is nothing more than the voice of the people asking for messages of Divine sympathy and help.

A high order of church music,

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profound logic in the pulpit, or a brilliant display of oratory from the platform, may please the taste and gratify the sensibilities of many, but experience has taught us that the Apostle was right when he declared that, the tongue of men or even of angels, and the gifts of prophecy and understanding of mysteries, would not suffice to satisfy the real needs of the soul without love.

There is an old legend that once a Hindu prince was stricken with blindness. All the skilled physicians and wise men of the realm were called to the palace to give their advice as to the way by which he might regain his sight. No ex-

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pense was spared, no undertaking was considered too difficult that offered any hope; yet it was in vain, and the youth lived on shrouded in darkness amid the glittering grandeurs of his station. One day, a holy hermit presented himself before the king and offered to bring back the boy's vision on the one condition that the subjects of the realm should present themselves before the royal residence. So the order was sent forth, and there came a great multitude from every quarter of the land, glad to do their sovereign's will and help their lord, the prince. Then the hermit rose and addressed the people. In words of deepest pity he

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spoke of the sufferings of men, and with a pathos that was born of fellow feeling he told them of the heavy burdens that men were compelled to bear, and the pains and sorrows that they endured. As he proceeded, the hearts of those who listened were moved with compassion, and tears coursed down their cheeks. Heart had touched heart, sympathy had engendered sympathy. Seeing that the people had been stirred with a feeling of compassion, the hermit stepped down from his place of speaking, and, putting forth his hand, gathered the tears from the cheeks of some who had wept and with them touched the eyes of the prince, who

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saw again. Sympathy had wrought a miracle.

Men, who are broken in heart, seek those whose hearts are broken for others; men, who are burdened, go to those who themselves are burdened in soul for their fellow men.

“It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind.”

There are preachers who hold our attention by the magic of their eloquence; there are preachers who charm us with their use of language; there are preachers who bring tears to our eyes with their tenderness of expression; there are

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preachers who stir our minds with their pleadings; there are preachers who cause us to clinch our fists with their denunciation; but the preachers who move our wills and consciences to do and dare for Christ are men who, through their power of heart, take hold of our lives and grip us with their divinely wrought personalities. We cannot always tell why, but we know that listening to such men we realize our likeness to God and we feel a great responsibility resting on our souls.

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MEN WHO KNOW THE LIV- ING CHRIST.

It is a great privilege for any man to realize that he has been Divinely appointed to stand before his fellow men and deliver a definite message. If, in addition to that sense of ambassadorship, he possesses a profound conviction that He, by whom he has been appointed, is present with him as he speaks, he will deliver his message in holy confidence and conviction of spiritual strength. There have been men who have done this very thing. Done it, not merely because

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they possessed an unwonted degree of natural ability, or power of feeling and imagination, but because they were men of faith and entered into faith's experience.

When the rulers and elders of the Jews sought to intimidate Peter and John by demanding an explanation of the secret of their miraculous power, the Apostles, with a courage born of Heaven, replied that it was by means of the living Christ whom they, their judges, had slain. On perceiving the boldness of the two men and realizing that they were unlearned and ignorant, "they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

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“The present days are Christ’s days and we are his contemporaries,” said the Archbishop of Canterbury. His contemporaries to realize His nearness and to be inspired by His presence. “It is no longer I that live,” cried Paul in the fullness of faith, “but Christ that liveth in me.”

In all the stress and din of the age, in all the struggle for property and privilege, in all the craving for enlightenment and progress, there is a voice that sounds clear and loud above the tumult and confusion of conflicting forces that are working for a newer and better civilization. Never in the history of man has that voice suffered

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itself to be silenced. It has ever been heard amid the discussions of statesmen, the clamoring of the religious sects, the warring of enthusiasts, and the rush and hurry of men struggling for supremacy in church and state, and never has it been heard more clearly than to-day, saying, to every man, "Follow me! I am the way, the truth, and the life."

"Once it was known that the Highest did of a surety dwell in this nation," said Thomas Carlyle in writing of England, "leading, by steep and flaming paths, by heroism, pieties and noble acts and thoughts, this nation heavenward, if it would and dared. Known or

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not, this (or else the terrible *inverse* of this) is forever the fact!"

Gradually, the Christian Church is coming to realize clearly the great truth that the resurrection of Jesus meant more than a confirmation of His deity; that it meant also His continued life among men and His continued interest in their affairs.

By His spirit He stands to-day in our boards of trade, He works with mechanics in shops and mills, He studies with the young in schools and colleges, He is an adviser of tradesmen in stores and markets, He comforts and helps parents and children in the home, and He directs and inspires His

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ministers in the pulpits, that they may deliver real messages from a real God. He is the solution of all our social difficulties, the unerring guide in all the affairs of life.

“Christ is walking through our streets,
Looking in each face He meets,

Tenderly.

Not only in the church He stands,
Where suplicants kneel with folded
hands,

Not only in the closet where
He lifts the load of human care,
But in the busy haunts of life,
And in the midst of toil and strife,
Walks He with His bleeding feet,
Walks He where the people meet,
But they scorn Him, pass Him by,

And in their hearts they madly cry,
Crucify.”

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The Church has long dwelt on the awful sacrifice of Calvary; she could not give it too important a place in her teaching. The crucifixion of Christ stands alone the greatest and most far-reaching event of history. But in these latter days she is coming to realize as never before that Calvary was followed by Olivet; that Jesus not only wore a crown of thorns, but that He now wears a crown of glory and power; that walking among men He is ever calling them to acknowledge His leadership, saying as He said of old, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

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Face to face with a complex civilization, the Church is called to prove her teaching and right to consideration in the affairs of men. There is no avoidance of the issue, there can be no compromise. She must either surrender her claim or take the initiative and guide the waiting multitudes into the light. It is no wonder, therefore, that she demands of her leaders that they should be true messengers of a living Christ, whose presence they realize and of whose power they partake.

MEN WHO ARE SWAYED BY ONE AMBITION.

The ambition to magnify Jesus Christ and His kingdom is an overmastering ambition and inspires men with spiritual force. A holy passion possesses those who are under its power ; they become eager to bring their fellow men to a knowledge of God. Knowing that subservience to the will of Christ would create a higher standard of truth and honesty in business, a stronger bond of sympathy and consideration in society, and a greater degree of love and helpful-

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ness in the world of employment and labor, they become enthusiasts for the Son of God. Serving the world under the sway of their ambition, they enter into the faith and experience of the Apostle, and cry with him, "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"—"Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

"Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is a triumph of some enthusiast," said Emerson. "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm," and when it is kindled by love for, and confidence in the Son of God, men come under its influence and pause to listen and

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consider the message that is being spoken.

The Church knows that to fulfil her mission she must have leaders who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who by dauntless zeal and heroism are able to bring men to realize the importance of considering the things that are essential.

“Why is it that Mr. Wesley is able to set men on fire with his words?” one asked of another who knew the great preacher. “It is because he is on fire himself,” was the answer.

There is but one passion that is worthy of commanding possession in the life of God’s Prophets. It is a passion to magnify Christ and

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extend His sway. Such a passion is purer and more comprehensive than all others, for it is stirred by loyalty to God and love for man. The one thing that will keep the world from drifting into materialism and blindness of heart is not cold theology, for "no man ever became a Christian simply by accepting the doctrines of the Christian religion," nor by lauding tinsel ecclesiasticism, but enthusiasm for Jesus Christ under the leadership of men who speak for God, with God, and by the power of God.

In the stress and struggle of present-day life, the Church is coming to a strong sense of her need of leaders who have no time

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to wrangle over creeds or inclination to exploit trivial theories, but who realize their calling as ambassadors of Heaven to beseech men on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God.

In the dim past a seer arose among the people. With shaded eyes he peered into the future and spoke of a day when sons and daughters of men would prophesy, when old men would dream dreams, and young men would see visions. That day came on the day of Pentecost. It is coming again in these opening years of the century; already there is rising a Church in the world, the members of which are discovering greater

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possibilities of service than was ever conceived in the minds of their fathers.

With a profound faith and confident expectation of the triumph of the divine kingdom, Christians may look forward to the work of the Church with hope and joy, and live in the expectation of new glories and new victories.

THE END.

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

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